ment of coal for the power sector including for the proposed private power projects. Various Independent Power Producers (IPPs) are negotiating with the Coal companies and the Railways to finalise the agreements for supply and transportation of coal. The Coal Supply Agreement for the Ib Valley Project has already been finalised. The Ministry of Coal has also identified 13 mining blocks for captive mining by IPPs. Any difficulty being faced by the IPPs are attended to on priority basis by the Ministry of coal and the Ministry of Railways. Ministry of Power is also in the process of framing model fuel supply and transportation agreements to assist the IPPs.

Credit Rating by JBRI

*271. SHRI RAM DAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's failure to reduce fiscal deficit, high levels of external debt and tardy progress with regard to improving bureaucratic structure, has retrained the Japan Bond Research Institute (JBRI) from improving India's Credit Rating as reported in the Financial Express New Delhi Edition, dated 1.08.1995;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the reaction of the Government to JBRI's report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) The Japan Bond Research Institute (JBRI) have conveyed their decision to affirm BBB+ as sovereign rating of India for foreign currency long term debt, which is the same as their last rating in 1994. While indicating that further improvement is required in areas such as fiscal deficit, external debt and bureaucratic structures, JBRI have acknowledged the continuing progress in the economy reflected in higher growth rate of GDP, improved external balance, strong export growth and continuing structural reforms, in arriving at an investment grade rating of BBB+.

(c) The reforms being undertaken by the Government are aimed at enhancing the overall performance of the economy, further, thereby enabling a higher rating for Indian future.

Currency seized from Customs Officials

*272. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently the Central Bureau of Investigation had seized a huge amount of unaccounted Indian and foreign currency from the possession of the customs officials during a raid extracted from the passengers coming to India;

(b) if so, what action has been taken by Government against the officials found quilty; and

(c) what are the plans Government are thinking to avoid such situation in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY): (a) to (c) On 20/7/95, a surprise check was conducted by the officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (Hyderabad Branch) on customs officials at Hyderabad Airport. This resulted in the seizure of a total amount of Rs. 22,700/- in Indian currency, and foreign currency of UAE Dirhams 2,855/-, Oman Riyal 25, US Dollars 262 and Saudi Riyal 560, from the possession of some customs Inspectors who were on duty at the Airport.

A case had been registered by the C.B.I. on July 25, 1995 under relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act read with IPC, against the Customs officials.

Air Intelligence Units are being strengthened, selection procedure made stringent, and the frequency of surprise checks by the other supervisory staff and vigilance staff of the various Commissionerates and Custom Houses are being increased.

Efforts to Increase Tourists in Assam

*273. SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether special efforts have been made by Government to increase the number of tourists visiting Assam during current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof separately for domestic and foreign tourists;

(c) whether some new areas of attraction have been added;

(d) if so, the details thereof with amount spent by Union Government;

(e) whether Union Government propose to make joint efforts with some other States of the country to increase tourism potential in future; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government of India has recently amended the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963 which will ease the restrictions imposed on the movement of foreign tourists to Assam. In addition, more air links have been allowed to the North East region including Asssam, which will benefit both domestic and foreign tourists.

(c) and (d) The main attractions for the tourists in Asssam continue to be Wildlife, adventure, pilgrimage etc. During 1994-95, a sum of Rs. 52.99 lakhs has been santioned as Central Financial Assistance for the State of Assam.

(e) and (f) The Government of India will continue to make joint efforts with all States of the Country to increase the tourism potential by improving infrastructural facilities, by publicity and marketing efforts, human resource development etc.

Behaviour of Customs Officers with Passengers

*274. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some Airports in general and Madras in particular are harsh to incoming air passengers;

(b) if so, what steps are proposed to ensure that customs officers behave with politeness, consideration and ractitude to passengers;

(c) the measures proposed to ensure that Madras Customs take immediate corrective steps; and

(d) whether Government are also aware of the unpleasant incidents suffered by outgoing passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Apart from attending promptly to complaints of rude behaviour, the Department is also having training programmes to inculcate proper behaviour, conduct and helpful attitude to the officers at the airports.

(d) Government are aware of some incidents where Customs officers have to check at random or on an information, some outgoing passengers for prevention of smuggling of contraband like narcotics, antiques, wildlife products, foreign exchange, etc. out of the country.